

White House Conference on Aging

Post –Event Summary Report

Mississippi White House Conference on Aging - Designated Event

Name of Event: Mississippi Association of Planning and Development Districts 2005 Annual PDD Conference

Date of Event: March 30, 2005

Location of Event: Beau Rivage Convention Center, Biloxi, MS

Number of Persons Attending: 110

Sponsoring Organizations: The Mississippi Department of Human Services,
Division of Aging and Adult Services

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Attendees: Baby Boomers-53 Over Age Sixty-11 Total in attendance-110

PRIORITY ISSUE 1. Health and Long Term Care

Recommendation 1. Encourage physician participation in Medicare and Medicaid

Barriers:

- Persons with income that prevents their eligibility for Medicare/Medicaid yet cannot afford private insurance
- Cuts in reimbursements to providers
- Too much paperwork and documentation

Proposed Solutions:

- Raise Medicare and Medicaid provider reimbursements
- Expand coverage of preventative diagnosis and treatment
- Educational stipends for healthcare providers
- Streamline reimbursement process

Recommendation 2. Provide training for direct care workers in formal and informal long term care environments

Barriers:

- Inadequate staff in long term facilities and health and community based services
- Lack of educational opportunities and funding
- Lack of collaboration between agencies

Proposed Solutions:

- Reform the state certification requirements for direct care workers
- Coordinate state/local/district training programs including volunteer scholarship training
- Networking between agencies using web-based methods
- Provide training to health care providers

Recommendation 3. Provide information and access to system of existing benefits and resources

Barriers:

- Fragmentation of the information system for available resources
- There is no consumer-centered system for access to long term care information

Proposed Solutions:

- Establish a point of entry and mandate all agencies to input and update resource information
- Encourage a long term care information system that can help care givers access appropriate services

PRIORITY ISSUE 2. Senior Housing**Recommendation 1. Assist the senior to live at home safely****Barriers:**

- Current housing choices may not be senior friendly
- Older homes in need of extensive repairs/renovations
- The continuing decline of inner-city neighbourhoods where many of the elderly live
- Security

Proposed Solutions:

- Cost share program to implement repairs/adaptations for “senior safety”
- Develop Habitat for Humanity for seniors
- Consider “Estate” or children’s sweat equity
- Establish Neighbourhood Watch programs to check on the elderly living alone

Recommendation 2. Increase Affordable housing for all income levels**Barriers:**

- Costly and hard to find
- People are uneducated on what funding may be available
- Lack of adequate affordable housing

Proposed Solutions:

- Promote non-profit involvement
- Allow Medicaid reimbursement for assisted living
- Encourage housing authorities and homebuilders to develop “senior friendly” low to moderate housing
- Develop options to tap home equity: (e.g., home loans and reverse mortgages)

Recommendation 3. Promote affordable living “at home” that will allow older persons to remain in their own homes cared for by family, with arrangements for assistance needed in the home setting**Barriers:**

- Escalating property taxes that negatively affect those on fixed incomes
- Minimal pre-planning for long term care
- Care givers must work and cannot afford to provide assistance for care recipients

Proposed Solutions:

- Offset Federal Income Tax by local Property tax paid by older home owners
- Allow care givers to claim aging care recipients as dependents on federal income tax
- Promote long term care insurance planning for Baby Boomers
- Encourage home equity options (e.g., reverse mortgages) to pay for services and support

PRIORITY ISSUE 3. Home and Community Care Issues

Recommendation 1. Address the nutritional needs of the elderly by the availability of meals to the homebound

Barriers:

- Transfer of funds restrictions causing dependence on congregate meal programs
- Insufficient number of meals offered per week
- Transportation liability/price of fuel and insurance premiums
- Agency coordination

Proposed Solutions:

- Allow local flexibility for the transfer of funds
- Adequately fund Meals on Wheels programs
- Provide meals seven days a week
- Focus on developing nutrition education

Recommendation 2. Address the needs of in-home care

Barriers:

- Unwillingness of family members to take financial responsibility
- Not enough trained, bonded workers
- Transportation of seniors to health care providers or community services
- Limited service providers especially in rural areas

Proposed Solutions:

- Offer tax credit for family members providing in-home care
- Give financial stipends to care giver relief, particularly around the clock servers
- Develop training and certification of in-home care givers

Recommendation 3. Senior Centers that address the particular needs of the community

Barriers:

- Senior needs differ in rural and urban areas
- Attendance and interest at Senior Centers has dwindled
- Transportation barriers limit access to Senior Centers, particularly in rural areas

Proposed Solutions:

- Provide centers that are unique to the needs of seniors in local communities
- Develop programs for today's senior (better educated, more physically active, and ethnically diverse)
- Involve local government entities and civic organizations to redesign Senior Center concepts
- Explore effective transportation options for the rural senior

PRIORITY ISSUE 4. Workplace of the Future

Recommendation 1. Expand experiential “on-the-job” learning opportunities for the older worker

Barriers:

- Availability of jobs especially in rural areas
- Reluctance to employ the senior
- Transportation issues especially in rural areas

Proposed Solutions:

- Provide tax incentive program offered to employers of seniors

- Educate employers on the benefits of the senior employee
- Develop a community car pool service through local taxi services or volunteers

Recommendation 2. Enhance opportunities for lifelong career development

Barriers:

- Employment needs change with technological advancement
- Cost of employee retraining
- Employers are not aware of the many benefits of older workers

Proposed Solutions:

- Promote courses to retrain employees to keep up with technological advances
- Offer tax incentives to companies that employ and train seniors
- Educate employers about positive aspects of hiring senior workers
- Remove age restriction penalty from Social Security that limits earning power for seniors

Recommendation 3. Keep jobs in America

Barriers:

- Ready supply of cheap labor in foreign markets
- Politics

Proposed Solutions

- Tax incentives for companies to utilize U.S. labor
- Better control of cheap imports that compete with locally produced items

PRIORITY ISSUE 5. Planning along the lifespan

Recommendation 1. Increase retirement savings

Barriers:

- Low income families cannot afford to save for the future
- Limited opportunity for advancement for low-wage earners
- Strong reliance on Social Security to provide them with adequate retirement income
- Not recognize the need for future planning
- Few employer sponsored retirement systems

Proposed Solutions:

- Promote the need to start saving early
- Educate Baby Boomers on types of investments and tax benefits for savings
- Provide tax incentives for business/employers to establish pension funds and retirement plans

Recommendation 2. Encourage purchase of Long Term Care Insurance

Barriers:

- Dependence on government programs
- Poorly educated on need for long term care insurance
- Cost

Proposed Solutions:

- Offer tax incentives for Baby Boomers to obtain long term care insurance
- Promote educational programs on the need for life planning while still young
- Encourage self reliance
- Provide financial assistance to low income families for obtaining long term care insurance

PRIORITY ISSUE 6. Social Engagement

Recommendation 1. Recruiting and training of community volunteers and target retirees and professional organizations

Barriers:

- Lack of willingness to volunteer
- Not understanding the communities' need for volunteers
- Competition for volunteers in small communities

Proposed Solutions:

- Community awareness (news ads and public service announcements)
- Information distributed through community meetings, television, and political offices
- Utilize student volunteers, creating a life-long commitment to volunteerism
- Target partnerships with programs for retirees to utilize their skills through senior centers and community education programs
- Create Area Agency on Aging clearinghouse for volunteer opportunities; matching volunteer interest with opportunity